

Types and nomenclature of two Chilean parrots from the voyage of HMS *Blonde* (1825)

by Storrs L. Olson

Received 14 December 1994

During my investigation of archival records and specimens from the voyage of HMS *Blonde* (28 September 1824 to 15 March 1826; Captain Lord Byron), I discovered that the nomenclature of the two species of parrots obtained by the expedition in Chile has been seriously bungled. These species are now known as the Patagonian Conure *Cyanoliseus patagonus* (Vieillot) and the Slender-billed Conure *Enicognathus leptorhynchus* (King). I have introduced the ornithological history and archival sources of the voyage of the *Blonde* elsewhere (Olson 1986; in press). At the end of the voyage, the expedition's naturalist, Andrew Bloxam, submitted the specimens he had collected, along with his natural history notes, to the Secretary of the Admiralty. Bloxam himself never had anything further to do with the *Blonde* material and most of his observations were never published. The majority of Bloxam's specimens that still exist are in the British Museum (Natural History), as are various copies of his unpublished notes, in one of which are the following entries concerning Chilean parrots. Bloxam added specific names of his own invention, his only source of nomenclature being a translation of the 13th edition of "Linnaeus's" (=Gmelin's) *Systema Naturae* (Turton 1800). To avoid any possibility of these names being considered as taking their publication from the present work, I have replaced them with transcriptions that have no nomenclatural standing. Except for these instances, bracketed portions are from a rougher set of notes.

7. [27] Psittacus Parrakeet [Bloxam's specific name added a Latin locative suffix to the locality "Conception"]

N. 1. L. 20 inch. Tail long & pointed. Cere round the eye white. Cheeks covered with f[eathe]rs, head not crested. Upper parts muddy [dingy] green, tail coverts yellow, tail green, wing coverts brighter green, quill feathers blue. Bill black [short & strong], legs yellowish. Belly red, flanks & thighs yellow, on upper part of the breast a half circle [semicircle] of dusky white & brown feathers. Lower part dull green. Wing coverts underneath green, quills dark brown. They fly about in flocks of 20 or 30 uttering harsh screams & cries. Common about the peninsula of Talcahuana [near Conception]. They are also sometimes, tho' seldom, seen in the neighbourhood of Valparaiso. [Shot at Conception.]

8. [28] Psittacus Parakeet [Bloxam's specific name added a Latin locative suffix to the locality "Chili"].

N. 2. L. 16 inch. Upper mandible rather long & sharper than the last, dark colored. Legs scaly & dark colored. Upper plumage fine green, top of head faintly barred with black. A red line runs on each side from the eye to the upper mandible & crosses over at the base of the beak. Tail f[eathe]rs rather long, pointed & red. Quill f[eathe]rs of wings bluish green. Under parts green with a tinge of red about the belly. Tail underneath red, quill f[eathe]rs underneath dusky brown. Cere round the eye is dark colored. A few minute red f[eathe]rs surround the eye. Shot at Conception. Both this & the former are of the Parakeet tribe, having their heads without crests tho' covered with feathers & a long pointed tail.

The preceding descriptions refer unequivocally to *Cyanoliseus patagonus* and *Enicognathus leptorhynchus*, respectively. The *Blonde* anchored off Talcahuano, near Concepcion, on 29 September and sailed on 12 October 1825, so we now know the collection data for these specimens, which are each ultimately holotypes, with considerably more precision than has been stated before. These data could possibly be further refined by consulting Bloxam's diary in the B. P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, the Chilean portions of which I have not examined.

Some five years after the return of the *Blonde*, J. E. Gray (1831) published descriptions of six species from the voyage based on specimens said then to be in the British Museum, though four of these species were from Hawaii and had been previously known and described (Olson in press). One, however, was a parrot from Chile, that was named as follows:

Lord Byron Parrot. Psittacus (Aratinga) Byroni. Children's MSS. Brit. Mus. Green; forehead lores to the orbits bright-red; tail feather [sic] rufous, brown; shaft greenish black, larger quills bluish, with shaft and inner edge black; tips of crown-feathers blackish; upper mandible elongate, produced; apex acute; culmen produced. Length 17 inches; wing 9; bill 1½ inches. Inhab. Chili.

J. G. Children was J. E. Gray's predecessor at the British Museum, but there does not seem to be an existing manuscript that would bear on this subject (M. Walters pers. comm.). Regardless, the preceding description can only apply to the species we now know as *Enicognathus leptorhynchus*. As incredible as it may seem, apparently no ornithologist in the past 163 years, even the usually meticulous Salvadori (1891), has read J. E. Gray's description of *byroni* with sufficient attention to comprehend its consequences, because the name *byroni* later came to be used as a subspecies of *Cyanoliseus patagonus* and is still thus employed. Warren (1966: 47) noted the discrepancy between the original description and the appearance of the putative type of *byroni* (and all other specimens of *Cyanoliseus patagonus*), but without coming to the realisation that Gray's name obviously applied to another species altogether.

In the 1830s, J. E. Gray's brother, G. R. Gray, entered the bird collections of the British Museum into a series of volumes sometimes referred to as the Old Vellum Catalogue (Warren 1966: 47), or simply the Vellum Catalogue (Knox & Walters 1992), in which Bloxam's two Chilean parrots were entered in book 22. The entry for species number 4 is "*Psitticara leptorhynca* King. Zool. Proc." under which appears "*Aratinga Byronii* Vigors' Mss". Two specimens are listed: 4a is from "Chili, Lord Byron Capt. R.N." and 4b is from "King's Voyage, The Admiralty". The former is the true holotype of J. E. Gray's (1831) *Psittacus byroni*, though what Vigors's connection with the name may have been I have not determined. The latter specimen is surely the holotype of *Psitticara leptorhyncha* King (1831), which has been overlooked in the general collections and was not listed by Warren (1966). Salvadori (1891) mentions this specimen, giving its provenance only as "The Admiralty", apparently without realising it was from

King's voyage and therefore the type specimen. Each of these specimens has suffered damage to the bill—the end of the upper mandible is broken off in Bloxam's bird and the entire upper mandible is lacking in King's, so that the feature that gave the species its name is unfortunately no longer present in the type.

Cyanoliseus patagonus appears in book 22 as species number 34 and is listed with the following sequence of names: "*Psittacus patagonicus*, Vieill., *Psittacara Bloxhami* [sic] Mss., *Psittacara patagonica* Less., *Arara patagonica* Less., *Ps. platyrhynchus* Les.?" The two specimens are 34a from "Chili, Lord Byron" and 34b from "Rev^d. Hennah". The former is the specimen that has for years erroneously passed as the type of J. E. Gray's *Psittacus byroni* (e.g. Warren 1966). The error I believe is traceable to G. R. Gray, who must have forgotten his own entries in the Vellum Catalogue and later confounded the two specimens of parrots from the voyage of the *Blonde*. Beginning in 1845 (G. R. Gray 1844–49: vol. 2: 413), and several times later, G. R. Gray (1859, 1870) listed *P. byroni* as a synonym under names applicable to the Patagonian Conure *Cyanoliseus patagonus*.

Thus, when the distinctiveness of the isolated Chilean form of this species was recognised, the name thought to be applicable to it was J. E. Gray's *byroni*. This distinction was first proposed in an anonymous announcement that Salvadori (1891) credits to P. L. Sclater (*Proc. Zool. Soc. London* 1873: 761):

Two of the smaller variety of the Patagonian Conure, received in exchange Oct. 13th.

This smaller and brighter form of the Parrot, found in Mendoza and other states of the Argentine Republic, would appear to be best entitled to the name *patagonus*, that name having been founded by Vieillot on Azara's description of specimens seen at Buenos Ayres. The larger form of Chili and the west coast may be called *Comurus byroni* (J. E. Gray), if, as proposed by Finsch, *cyanolyseos* of Molina be rejected as inadmissible.

Ever since, the Chilean subspecies of Patagonian Conure has taken the name *byroni* and has even been known as "Lord Byron's Conure" (e.g. Prestwich 1958). Incidentally, it should be noted that Prestwich (*op. cit.*) confounded his Byrons in the first edition of his book, considering the name *byroni* to have been dedicated to the poet's grandfather (who was not a peer), rather than to the poet's cousin and successor, who was captain of the *Blonde*. The error was corrected in the second edition of 1963.

From the original description it is clear that the name *Psittacus byroni* J. E. Gray (1831) pertains to the same species as *Psittacara leptorhyncha* King (1831), proposed in the same year. King's publication was delivered to the Zoological Society on 6 January 1831 (see *Proc. Zool. Soc. London* 1937: 78), whereas the exact date of issue of the first part of J. E. Gray's *Zoological Miscellany* is apparently uncertain (see editor's note to the 1971 facsimile edition). It is hardly likely to have been issued prior to King's paper in any case, and, in the absence of information to the contrary, for nomenclatural purposes the date of J. E. Gray's publication must be set at 31 December. Therefore *Psittacus byroni* J. E. Gray (1831) becomes a junior subjective synonym

of *Psittacara leptorhyncha* King (1831) and simply drops out of use, so that we may fortunately continue using *Euicognathus leptorhynchus* (King) for the Slender-billed Conure.

This means, however, that the Chilean subspecies of Patagonian Conure is without a name, for which I therefore propose:

Cyanoliseus patagonus bloxami subsp. nov.

Holotype. Adult skin, British Museum (Natural History) Vellum Catalogue 22:34a. Collected near Concepcion, Chile, probably on the Talcahuano Peninsula, between 29 September and 12 October 1825, by Andrew Bloxam.

Characters. As has been recognised by many authors, the Chilean bird is much larger and has the dingy whitish pectoral band better developed, being wider and more nearly complete across the breast, rather than being confined to the sides as in nominate *patagonus* of Argentina. The amount and intensity of red and yellow in the belly has been subject to conflicting interpretation. Sclater (see above) considered the nominate form to be brighter, whereas Forshaw (1989: 470) thought the red brighter in the Chilean birds. In the small series of each that I examined, the ventral coloration appears to be subject to considerable individual variation, as well as being affected by fading and by the manner of preparation. Both bright and dull birds with varying amounts of red or yellow were present in both subspecies. Less equivocal, however, is the dorsal coloration, which in the Chilean birds is darker green, the feathers tipped and suffused with fuscous, so that the head, nape, and mantle are essentially concolorous. In nominate *patagonus* the upper parts are lighter, with the dusky forehead set off by the lighter green of the nape as compared with the more brownish-grey mantle.

Distribution. Isolated in central Chile, formerly from Atacama south to Valdivia, but numbers now much reduced due to habitat destruction, hunting, and trapping for the pet trade (Forshaw 1989).

Etymology. To Andrew Bloxam, naturalist of HMS *Blonde*, with the hope that this will more permanently engrave his name in ornithological nomenclature. Two other birds were once dedicated to him: *Sylvia bloxami* J. E. Gray (1831), and *Phytotoma bloxami* Jardine and Selby (1827), which latter was described under the same name, apparently independently, by Griffith (1829). These are synonyms of the species now known as *Anairetes parulus* (Kittlitz) and *Phytotoma rara* (Molina), respectively, so that Bloxam's eponyms have long passed out of use. Even when Jardine and Selby named *Phytotoma bloxami*, they did not indicate to whom the species was dedicated, saying only that the specimen had been brought back by Lord Byron.

Acknowledgements

For access to Bloxam's notes, specimens, registers, and literature, I am most grateful to staff of the British Museum (Natural History), especially Michael Walters, who has assisted in this particular endeavour in numerous ways and who commented on the manuscript. For additional comments I am grateful to Gary R. Graves.

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A nest of the Restinga Tyrannulet *Phylloscartes kronei*

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Received 31 December 1994

The recently described Restinga Tyrannulet *Phylloscartes kronei*, an endangered southeast Brazilian endemic belonging to the *Phylloscartes ventralis* (Temminck) group, seems to occur primarily in sand-ridge woodland (*restinga*) and adjacent riverine forest of the Ribeira valley in southeastern São Paulo, Brazil (Willis & Oniki 1992).

According to our observations this species seems to prefer, at least in the breeding season, swampy areas with standing pools of water. On 24 October 1993, we detected a nest in swampy *restinga* about three miles (5 km) northeast of the village Barra do Ribeira. The location is near Porto do Prelado (24°36'S, 47°18'W according to E. O. Willis, *in litt.*). The oven-shaped nest was about 4 feet (1.3 m) from the ground in a